NATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY RASHTRAPATI

MUSIC and dancing have been an essential part of the life of the people of this country. According to our traditional belief, fine arts sprang up from the same source which gave birth to meditation, spiritual aspirations, philosophy and literature of this country. When the different branches of knowledge took shape in the Vedic age, arts like music and dancing also appeared at that time.

That is the real reason that for centuries these arts have played such a prominent part in the religious and spiritual life of the Indian people. In the eyes of ancient seers and thinkers, music and dancing were the means of achieving life's *summum bonum* on this earth. Gradually, as these arts developed and the general people started taking interest in them, they became broad-based and popular.

How the art of dancing developed in course of time, how it took different forms in different regions, how it became a household affair under State patronage and how it came to be looked upon as a source of entertainment and of achieving physical and mental health, of all these things, I am sure, you are already aware. The vicissitudes of time and foreign invasions in the middle-ages led the dance away from the generality of people, particularly in the North where a social stigma came to be attached to dancing and respectable classes kept away from its so-called evil influences.

How far this attitude was correct or proper is a matter of opinion, which does not interest us here. Our duty in the changed circumstances of today should be to re-establish time-honoured arts of music and dancing to their proper classes so that they may be looked upon once again as a means of integral development of human personality. Let not the fount of these arts, conceived in an atmosphare of meditation, manifested in the traditional fervour of devotion and later patronised by kings, nobility and religious institutions, dry up in secular India, where religion is an individual's affair and the basis of society is egalitarian.

I think for the growth and proper development of these arts, no times could have been more propitious than the present. Instead of having to depend on the magnanimity of the nobility, these arts rely today on the support of the Indian masses. Far from being a means of entertainment for any particular class, these are

a source of recreation and healthy growth of the people as such. We could verily describe the present times as the golden age for the development of arts.

Whatever the Bharatiya Kala Kendra and the Sangeet Natak Akadami have done so far to encourage and promote these arts, is indeed admirable and of national importance. The Dance Festival which you have arranged, I am sure, will go a long way in bridging the gulf which separates the people from these arts.

During the short period of two years or so of its existence, the Sangeet Natak Akadami has held two similar festivals earlier. I feel that the hopes with which this institution was set up have been more than fulfilled. The foremost object of the Akadami should be to encourage arts by co-ordinating the activities of all organizations devoted to them. As far as I can see, the Sangeet Natak Akadami has been acquitting itself well in discharging this responsibility.

I heartily welcome this Dance Festival and congratulate all those organizations, artists and other workers through whose efforts and enthusiasm this festival could be held. I hope such festivals will be held in other parts of the country also and that the people will show greater and greater interest in them.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The Bharatia Kala Kendra has done great service to Indian culture, particularly in the spheres of music and dance. On behalf of the Sangeet Natak Akadami I express my gratitude to the Bharatiya Kala Kendra for having consented to organise the National Festival of Dance sponsored by the Akadami. I hope and believe that the Festival will serve to demonstrate the wealth of our cultural heritage in the field of dance and to stimulate further interest in that great art. I am unable to be present on the occasion of the inauguration, but my heart will be there. I send you my very best wishes for the success of the Festival in which I am as much concerned on behalf of the Akadami, as you all will be as organisers.

P. V. RAJAMANNAR,
Chairman, Sangeet Natak Akadami

WELCOME ADDRESS

By Shri N. Kanungo,

Chairman, Steering Committee

IT is a proud privilege of mine to welcome you all at this First National Dance Festival sponsored by the Sangeet Natak Akadami and organised by Bharatiya Kala Kendra. You will recall that the Sangeet Natak Akadami in its two and half years existence had already organised two National Festivals—National Music Festival held at the Red Fort and the National Drama Festival held at the Sapru Hall. Both these Festivals were inaugurated by the Rashtrapati. The Second National Music Festival is going to be held in Patna probably this year and you will be glad to know that the Akadami intends holding such National Festivals in other parts of the country also. It can thus be hoped that these National Festivals will become a necessary part of the cultural renaissance of our country since the achievement of our independence. This is the main aim of the Akadami.

We have attempted in this Festival to represent our main classical dance styles through their foremost exponents. Participants in the Festival include Smt. Bala Saraswathy and Smt. Shanta Rao for Bharatanatyam ; Guru Kunju Kurup and Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair for Kathakali and Shri Shambhoo Maharaj and Shri Brij Mohan for Kathak. Two groups are coming from Manipur to represent Manipuri style. Also among the participants are groups representing traditional dances such as Chhau Dance of Mayurbhanj, Chhau Dance of Seraikella, Kuchipudi Dance of Andhra, Odissi Dance of Orissa and Jhumra Dance of Assam.

Dance Festivals in the present age of cultural renaissance will not be fully representative if we do not present modern innovations, especially the Ballet. Hence we have invited renowned troupes of Shri Uday Shankar and Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai. Besides these well-known artistes you will have a chance of seeing other young and talented artistes.

Thus, it is probably the first effort to assemble on one stage the representatives of all styles of dancing in the country and therefore, many shortcomings are bound to be there. I hope you will bear with these shortcomings and extend your co-operation and blessings to the festival. I hope that this Dance Festival will certainly succeed to a great extent in revealing the rich traditions of our dance in all their diversity and unity.